ISSN 0164-1883

Trouser Press

November 1979
No. 44 $1.25
UK 75p

- JOHANSEN/ DOLLS
- MODERN LOVERS
- KINKS
- B52s

TALKING HEADS Face Their Fears

DAVID BYRNE

Talking Heads

By Galen Brandt

...Feeling!
Take it easy baby...
Don't let your feelings get in the way...
I can answer your questions,
If you won't twist what I say.
("I'm Not in Love"—David Byrne)

TP: What's the purpose of interviews?

DB: I don't know exactly what they're supposed to do. They could demistify the person talking. But why do you want to do that? In the eyes of other people, my reasons for doing things may not be the real reasons. I like interviews where either the interviewer or the interviewee has an aberrant personality.

The purpose of this interview is to let all four Talking Heads and two of their closest associates talk for themselves. The following are extracts from lengthy individual discussions that took place in David Byrne's loft, Eno's apartment, and the offices of Sire Records during the two weeks in late August prior to the Heads' **Fear of Music** promotional tour, and Eno's return to England to complete his new album.

Hard workers, these people, a factor they unanimously agree is one reason for their ever-increasing popularity. Their growing commercial success has been slow in coming, hard-won, and well-deserved. Although recession has hit the record industry, possible platinum sales for the new LP are predicted.

On record, in concert, and in person, the Heads succeed in being themselves. They do their best to resist the inaccurate images created by the media, their fans, the stress of public exposure, and even the temptation for the performer to become his/her own archetype. In conversation, they are articulate, intelligent, cooperative, straightforward, unassuming dedicated, clearsighted and funny.

They're also sane.

As far as I can tell, the only thing aberrant about the composer of "Psycho Killer" is the squadron of pigeons which he says watches him every morning through his bathroom window. But then, as he himself admits in "Animals," "I found out...animals don't help...they're setting a bad example."—GB

CAST OF CHARACTERS

David Byrne: Heads' vocalist and guitarist.
Tina Weymouth: Heads' bassist.
Chris Frantz: Heads' drummer.
Jerry Harrison: Heads keyboardist and guitarist.
Brian Eno: Heads' producer.
Ken Kushnik: Director of Artists Development, Sire Records.

TP: What was it like to play with Talking Heads for the first time?

JH: I think I was lucky to come to a group that was a trio, that didn't already have expectations of what the next person was going to do. That made it more open for me. I didn't have to learn anybody else's parts. I could hear what was going on and decide what I thought was very good. I tried to emphasize certain things, to make it clearer or a bit fuller. It seemed very clear to me what my role would be, at least at the beginning. It became more difficult as we started working on new material; then the options opened up.

TP: When you joined, did you feel as though you were stepping into a preformed family? Did that make you feel uncomfortable?

JH: No, they made me feel pretty welcome. We did it over a long period of time—about six months—mainly, I guess, because of me. After I'd stopped playing with the Modern Lovers, I continued playing in bands, and had given up at some point and decided to go back to graduate school. Then suddenly, I played with Elliot Murphy, made a record, and went on tour with him, and didn't go to school. I was at the point where I'd lose an acceptance to the school if I did it again, and, a week before, I'd sent in all my deposits and everything, and at that point I got this call to come down to New York and try playing with the Heads. I knew it sounded really good, but I just didn't know enough at that point to forget about school again. That kept me away until the band came up to Boston and I took a week and we played. That was really when I knew it was going to work, and I decided I would finish that semester and think about it. Luckily, it fit into my schedule.

TP: When did you first meet the Heads?

BE: I was in the audience at a London show. Chris saw me there and told their manager they would like to meet me and they invited me backstage. John Cale was there and he said, "I want them, you bugger!" It seemed like there was going to be this contest, which was rather peculiar; I wasn't thinking of producing them.

TP: The band asked you to produce them?

BE: Yeah. At first we didn't know each other very well, but we were friendly. There was a certain similarity of stance between us.

TP: Had you been feeling alienated in high school or at RISD?

DB: In those days—the late 60s—you'd do it to yourself then. People would exaggerate aspects of their personalities to make themselves interesting. I thought it was pretty jive, so I went the opposite way; I wanted to merge with everybody. I bought suits and double-knit pants, and I combed my hair regular.

TP: What had you looked like previous to this?

DB: More like a punk looks now. I had weird clothes, weird shoes with weird things on them, hair that stuck up and was colored—I had blonde hair for a while.

TP: Why?

DB: It was fun—a lot of fun!

TP: Why'd you stop?

DB: I don't know. Just felt I had to try something else.

TP: This attempt to look normal didn't work?

DB: Not exactly. The clothes required more upkeep than I was prepared to do. Then when we started playing I found out that these clothes weren't suited to stage—they show dirt you pick up from your amplifiers, and they get sweaty and smelly. So I and everybody else gravitated towards sensible road clothes—black levis and T-shirts—because they stood up to the wear and tear of the work we did.

TP: Did you have relatively happy childhoods?

TW: I think all of us are real lucky.

CF: We all had our problems but none of us ever went over the top.

TW: Everybody hated high school.

TP: Why did you?

TW: Because I was a loner. One time I tried out and became a cheerleader. It was just so unreal; I became *captain* of the cheerleaders but it didn't make me any happier. I still always felt really left out and different. I was living in Los Angeles, and I would try to sneak into the Whiskey because that was one place you could get in if you were underage. I'd see Paul Revere and the Raiders jumping in the swimming pool at Marineland and I felt they had such extraordinary, exciting lives. Radio was playing really good songs; when I was sixteen one of the big hits was "Love Is All Around" by the Troggs and Cream had "Sunshine of Your Love." Stuff like that created an atmosphere of excitement that you believed was incredibly intense. You thought a lot of people were having more fun than you were.

TP: Did you want to be rock'n'rollers in high school? Was music going to be your calling, or visual arts?

CF: I seriously thought I was going to be a painter. I was one of those people who did "Big Paintings," with acrylics.

TP: Does it seem now like a dumb thing to do?

CF: No, it doesn't. In fact, I think I'll probably go back to it when I get too old for this.

TP: When will that be?

TW: You can't be taken seriously as a painter until you're at least 40 years old.

TP: How much do you practice?

TW: When we were making the record we practiced every weekday from two until eight—we made out a schedule, just like in an office. Then at the end of the sessions, we also practiced on records. The sessions got longer and longer, so it seemed like nothing for us to play non-stop for eight hours.

CF: We don't have any junkies in the group who can't get up in the morning. Everybody in our group is pretty responsible. People are always telling us they can't believe we're on time. We don't even have a road manager *per se*; we get ourselves to the airport.

TP: Did you used to try to write for your audience?

DB: No. I wouldn't try to write for them but I would think about it. I would think, I wonder what people would like now? But all my ideas are wrong about that.

TP: For instance?

DB: Whenever we make a record the song that sounds best to me is never the one people like. On the first album, both Jerry and I thought "No Compassion" sounded the best; on the second album, Jerry, Brian and I all thought "Warning Song" was the most exciting. That's neither here nor there; it just means I shouldn't try to preguess what people are going to like.

TP: Did you deliberately try to make an uncommercial third album?

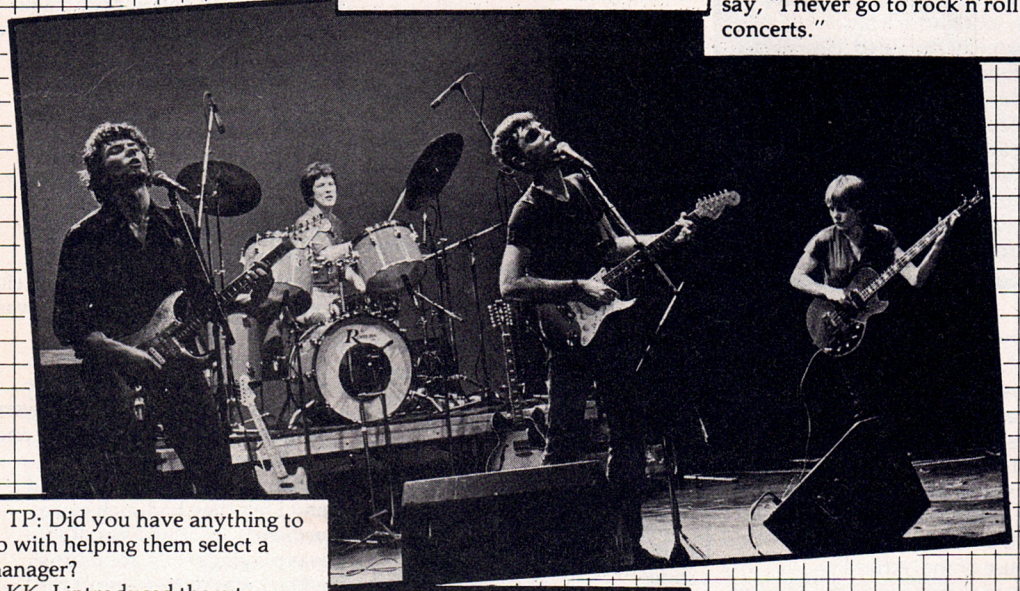
DB: No, I just didn't think about it at all.

TP: Are there other reasons for your increased success?

TW: I think we represent a trend. People are very sophisticated and aware; they just won't listen to badly-produced records anymore. At the same time they're very aware of commercial gimmicks. If people were to say we're the greatest rock band in the world, or the smartest people in the world, we wouldn't want to use quotes like that in advertising because that's going to turn off the very people who would like us. It's the same reason we never wanted to be promoted as punk. We felt punks would come see us anyway because they're in touch with what's happening. You have to advertise to the people who have no idea and possibly could like us but don't normally like rock'n'roll. There are people who come to our concerts who say, "I never go to rock'n'roll concerts."

TP: As Director of Artists Development, were you initially responsible for figuring out an image for the band which would help them gain mass acceptance?

KK: I don't try to figure out an image for anybody. Talking Heads have an image that is them: David Byrne is a truly peculiar person, in the sense that he's very special. Everybody in the band is bright and intelligent. They know what they want to put forth; and we just try and make that as easy as possible. We did have a major disagreement with them when they were put in with the "Get behind it before it gets past you" campaign, which featured four albums that we released at once. Three of those were punk bands, if you will—Richard Hell, the Saints, and the Dead Boys—and all four came out at once; it was a unified campaign. The Heads feel that that is part of what bagged them as a punk or new wave band, an image that they had to go out on the road and overcome, city by city. If they had to do it all over again, they would not have wanted to be in that campaign. If we had to do it all over again, we probably wouldn't have put them in the campaign. However, I think it definitely had something to do with the long life of the first album. We spent a campaign's worth of time, money and effort on those four records, and only one walked away from the release—the Heads. And we then proceeded to spend a campaign's worth of time, money and effort on that album, so that they got a double-dose of exposure, publicity, promotion, and cash spent to promote them. Granted, some of it might have been in a slightly wrong direction—I know they feel that—but I think it got their name out there and it did get people interested in coming down to see them. And when people saw them, they realized they weren't dealing with morons in leather jackets.



TP: Did you have anything to do with helping them select a manager?

KK: I introduced them to Gary (Kurfirst). I thought he'd be perfect as a manager. I don't mean to say they were difficult, but I knew they had some specific ideas of what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it, and they were not necessarily mainstream ideas. They're different from the average rock band attitude of where's-the-beer-and-when-do-we-get-paid-and-just-tell-me-when-to-wake-up-and-I'll-go-there-and-I'll-do-it. They want to have a good say in their career, and I thought Dee Anthony might be more interested in telling them what to do, and Gary might be more interested in helping them to do what they wanted to do. But Gary also had the expertise to point out to them when they had an idea that was just totally unviable as opposed to un-normal.

TP: Why did the Heads succeed while the other three Sire 'new wave' bands (Dead Boys, Saints, Hell) fell by the wayside?

KK: When the smoke cleared after 18 months, it was a lot more than three groups that fell by the wayside. The Heads persist because they make fascinating, excellent music. They do it well on record. They do it unbeleivably live—that's what put their career on the map, I think. Very few radio stations played their record at all. They went out and played it; they toured the country, city by city, and just won points, until all of a sudden somebody woke up and said, Jesus, this record's sold 100,000 copies; maybe we ought to pay attention. By the time the second album came out, they had a lot of big fans in Burbank who helped break the second record.

TP: Why do you think you've gained such a large audience?

TW: We offered an alternative to disco, rather than approaching it from what seems like the tail end of the dog. We just wrote songs that we liked ourselves.

CF: We've worked hard. We've toured a lot, and nothing can really take the place of touring. We're not a bunch of people who sit around New York, hang out in clubs, pretend we're rock stars all the time and never get west of New Jersey.

TP: Do you think you're an acquired taste?

JH: Well, I don't think we sound like everything else, so in that way perhaps we're an acquired taste. There are certainly lots of people who don't like us.

DB: A lot of times it's my voice they don't like. People find my voice makes them uncomfortable. I can understand their point of view, but I don't try to make it unsettling. I try to sing the best I can, and in as convincing a way as I can.

Eileen Colton

TP: What's the story behind "I Zimbra"?

DB: For a while I had wanted to write something using African rhythms and African high life guitar playing—that's what they call a particular kind of dance music. I worked out a lot of different riffs, bass parts, and combinations of instruments. There were seven or eight different sections in the song; we rehearsed them going from one section to the other, and then we narrowed them down to the sections in the song. Then we talked about having percussion players come in—conga players or something. Brian and I were walking in Washington Square Park one time and saw two guys who were real good; they came in and did their thing over the song. Then Fripp added his bit. He likes to come in with no one around, and throw out his ideas onto tape, and you pick the one you like. I tried some words but they just went on and on. Jerry tried some words but they seemed too literal. Then Eno suggested we use a Hugo Ball poem for the words that fit the meter; the nonsense syllables seemed to fit.

TW: "Electric Guitar" was originally just words typed on a paper. David showed me all the different words he had; they weren't finished, and didn't have any meaning because they were bits and pieces without any music or context. I said, go ahead with this one because it's so weird—instead of the other way around, which is to take something that's obviously well-written and acceptable. Then he sang it like he was retarded.

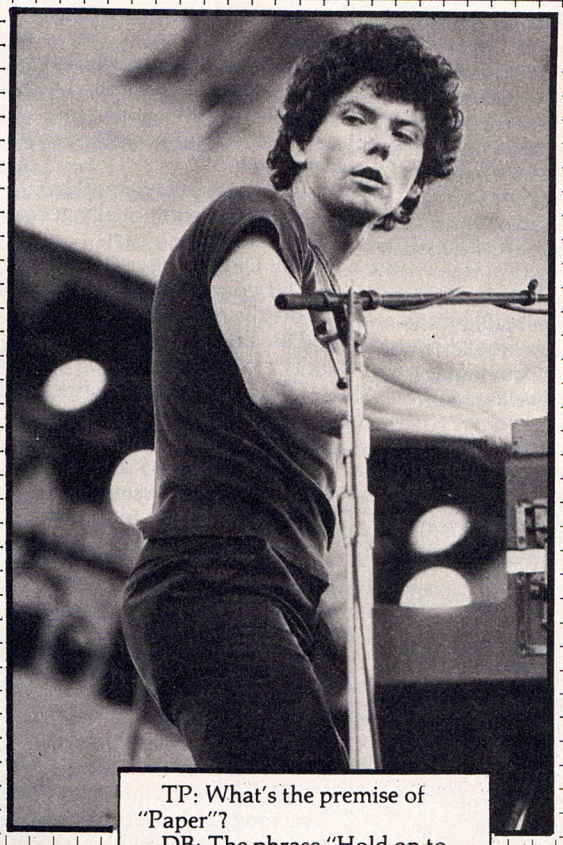
TP: Whose idea was that?

TW: David's. He always has his own ideas about how to sing his songs.

TP: And you don't tell him what to do?

TW: Absolutely not. Well, we tell him what works and what doesn't.

We told him to re-sing "Electric Guitar" because it sounded too retarded; you couldn't understand the lyrics. It was the same thing in "Psycho Killer": if he'd sung it like a psycho killer it wouldn't have been believable. By not holding back emotionally but being more reserved in technique, David was able to achieve more emotion.



TP: What's the premise of "Paper"?

DB: The phrase "Hold on to that paper" is used in such a way that paper seems like a substitute for a person or something very important and meaningful. Put like that, it doesn't make any sense at all. So I just proceeded from that.

TP: Why do you "rip up the paper" at the end instead of holding on to it while everything else crumbles?

DB: It was more fun to sing that ending.

TP: What kinds of myths were you trying to debunk in "Animals"?

DB: I disagreee with the idea that animals are noble savages, living in harmony with their surroundings and with each other. I thought I'd present a contrary point of view: animals as obstinate beings with lots of problems of their own, and we shouldn't pay any attention to them.

TP: Which is the strangest song on the album?

DB: Probably "Electric Guitar."

TP: What's that about?

DB: The words came first for that one. I used the technique of sing-speak-squeaking the words into a tape recorder in a sort of retarded voice. I had this idea for the verse's music: I wanted the guitar part to be real static. I just played the chords like 'bomp-bomp-bomp.' Then I thought the bass should do all the work, fly around it, play counterpoint and funny little melodies—trying to throw the thing off-rhythm. Jerry and I worked it out. Then Tina worked out the other part, the chorus.

TP: How did you design the **Fear of Music** cover?

DB: This one was mainly Jerry's idea. He originally wanted to use a different material—some sort of plastic—but that was too expensive. I designed the typeface and where it should go and how big it should be, and the layout. The inner sleeve photo was my idea.

TP: What was the inspiration—metal grating?

DB: It was rubber flooring, but it's the same pattern used on metal grates. Jerry found it very attractive; he thought it was a real nice pattern.

TP: Why did you call the album **Fear of Music**?

DB: The term is from a book, *Music and the Brain*. It's a collection of articles on different subjects. "Fear of music" is from a chapter called "Musicogenic Epilepsy." It seemed like a great contradiction in a way—as an album title.

TP: Who usually has the first germ of a song idea? David?

TW: "Heaven," for instance was a song David wanted to be a crooner on, like Frank Sinatra; he wanted to have a song where he could really sing. He had guitar chords and a vocal melody, but there was something wrong with the way it went from verse to chorus. Jerry basically transcribed the same melody into another key, and then it followed. Because it was essentially a country song, it was automatic what Chris and I would play. "Life During Wartime" was completely written from a jam. On "Animals" all of us had to fit our parts to David's part. It starts out in 5/4 time, then into 7/4 time, then back into 5/4. It's a real challenge because of the limitations on what you can do.

JERRY HARRISON/Ebet Roberts

TW: "Psycho Killer" was an early collaboration—the first song we ever wrote.

TP: Could you describe the process of collaboration, step-by-step?

CF: David and I were starting this group, the Artistics, and David had an idea for a song. He had the words to the first verse.

TW: He had the whole part about "I'm a real live wire."

CF: We worked on the middle part, the bridge part, the French part—

TW: The part about "I hate people who aren't polite," the vainness, because we didn't want to talk about the obvious things that had been dwelt on with psycho killers.

TP: Whose idea was it to make it a song about psycho killers?

TW: David's.

TP: He said: This is a song about psycho killers?

TW: Yeah.

TP: Who came up with "fa fa fa fa fa"?

CF: Otis Redding. We sort of incorporated it.

TW: David wanted to have as many clichés in the song as possible, so everybody could relate to it. And it was going to have a conventional rock structure, so we put in "yeah, yeah's" and "ooh ooh baby's" because those were French clichés.

TP: Did you also use a lot of clichés to make the psycho killer personality familiar, understandable?

TW: We were trying to make it seem like it could have been anybody, like a social disorder rather than something you're born with.

TP: Do you usually have a clear intention when you start writing a song?

DB: Yes; on the new album I made a list of subjects and points of view to write about.

TP: Why did you take that approach?

DB: Because I had nothing that I had to emotionally get off my chest.

TP: Did you have things to get off your chest when you wrote the other albums?

DB: Yes.

TP: Why not now?

DB: Got it off on the first two!

TP: How did you come up with the list?

DB: The things I'd been thinking about. I'd made some notes on tour—write a song about such-and-such—just the sort of things that occur to you at different times.

TP: How did you figure out which ones to turn into songs?

DB: I didn't. I just tried lots of them. Some were dead ends—unsuccessful.

TP: How can you tell when you've reached a dead end?

DB: I guess it's intuitive. For a long time I've been trying to write a song—I still haven't been able to—about economics, about money. It could be from any one of a number of points of view. That was one of the problems. I wanted it to be fairly technical. I didn't want it to be from the point of view of a poor person who wanted money, or a rich person who had lots of money but wasn't happy, or one of those clichés. I wanted it to be a real economic analysis but presented in a moving way, not just a description. I haven't been able to do that.

TP: People have suggested that Eno's role is to make your music weirder, that any odd sound is his doing.

DB: That's what people think. We use him because he's sympathetic to our ideas and we're sympathetic to his.

TP: So it's not that you're playing perfectly normal music, and he comes along and does weird things.

DB: He does that with other people. I think Phil Manzanera calls him up and says 'I want you to come over and weirdize these tracks.' But our stuff is a little bit off-center to begin with.

TP: Can you give an example of some sound people have attributed to Eno that in fact you did?

DB: It was my idea to treat the bass on "Electric Guitar." We just worked on it together.

TP: Do you think it ever does Talking Heads a disservice that people don't know specifically what your contribution is?

BE: Sure. It particularly affects Jerry, because he plays synthesizer. No one's going to think I did the singing, but people might think I did all the synthesizer playing. We deliberately left the album credits open to speculation. If we'd listed people by the instruments they played, it would have looked like I played everything. I'd add a little bit of guitar, a little bit of synthesizer; credits would have read: "Brian Eno: synthesizer, guitar, percussion, vocals, etc. etc."

TP: Isn't a lot of this seasoning?

BE: Right—doing something because no one else is around to do it. We had to finish the album in the middle of a tour, so I'd been working on it a bit while they were away.

TP: The band trusts you.

BE: We get on very well together. It's the best working relationship I've ever had within rock music.

TP: Perhaps one of the reasons your band gets along so well with Brian is that all of you recognize the value of what others might call 'mistakes.'

TW: That was the problem with our second record. Brian was really understanding in a song like "Take Me to the River." We played it live in the studio; Eno could very easily have imposed himself on that song because there's so much room for it. But it sounded so great on playback that we immediately decided that this song would have absolutely no additional playing on it except for single notes—one ping or bop or pong that was then treated by Brian's synthesizer the same as the snare so that it had a delay, an echo. That gave it a real underwater sound. We all agree there are certain things you can do that sound real nifty the first time but then become overbearing. In the original mix of "Electric Guitar," after the last chord dies, it expanded into a big sound of thunder, rain and London car horns—city sounds. Most people hearing it, if they lived in a city, would just think it was part of their own environment, they wouldn't think it was on the record. But we decided to take it out anyway, even though it was subtle, because people would hear it every single time and get tired of it.

TP: Why does "Life During Wartime" end on the record before the printed lyrics do?

DB: I wanted to give the impression that it could just go on and on with endless description of that scene. There were more words, so it goes on for a while after that. It was to give the idea that the song wasn't a story with a beginning and end—just a description.

TP: Do you find in general that your first singing take is the most convincing?

DB: No, not necessarily. In "Drugs," for instance, I tried a bunch of vocal styles: singing it real softly, singing in an exclamatory style. I got frustrated; neither of those seemed to work. I ended up doing a lot of exercises so I would sing it out of breath. Then I started jogging while singing; that worked out. It's this out of breath style; you hear a little bit of huffing and puffing.

TP: How does the band get along with Eno?

TW: I think he's very happy working with us. When he comes to work with us we have the songs essentially all written and arranged, so he can contribute his ideas to something that's already there.

TP: Does Brian like your second and third records?

TW: Brian said the second record was the best record he'd ever worked on. When he started working on the new one, before we'd even got rough mixes, he said it was better than the second record—revolutionary, in fact.

TP: You mean he likes to experiment?

TW: He likes to take risks, the same as we do.

CHRIS FRANTZ/Ron Pownall

TP: Are you in David's shadow as critics sometimes suggest? Do the two of you work *for* him or *with* him?

TW: I don't feel in David's shadow at all.

CF: I feel to a certain extent that critics find it makes life easier for them to do an interview with one member of the band rather than with four.

TP: So they pick him out because he's the writer?

CF: Well it's natural. They relate to other writers and they probably figure that if they were writing songs in a band they could find anybody to back them.

TW: We perform on stage in a rough diamond shape because it makes it easier to focus on a central personage.

TP: Does that do you a disservice?

TW: No, because audiences can always tell what's happening.

TP: How does he take criticism?

CF: David's pretty open as long as it's clear and constructive.

TW: There's a streak of defiance in David Byrne: he hates anything that's clichéd in modern life. When he's nervous he shows he's nervous because that's not a cliché. When he sits down in a chair he'll try to sit down in an unusual way just because he wants to be an individual. Recently he's been less and less likely to take advice because he's getting more and more advice from everybody—just anybody!

TP: Don't most people write songs about things they purport to believe in?

DB: They do. But I haven't been able to do it in an interesting way yet. A lot of the things I believe in are pretty ordinary, and I haven't been able to present them in an interesting way.

TP: Wouldn't that be a new challenge?

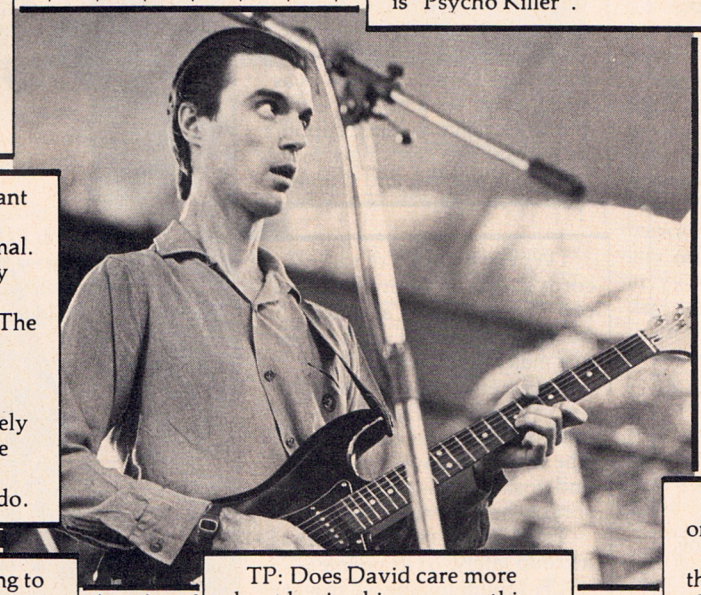
DB: It is a challenge, but I haven't been able to do it yet. Plus why should I? What makes my point of view better than this other point of view that I can adopt? It doesn't make any difference at all to me.

TP: So you're not being dishonest?

DB: No, I'm not. The only one that's completely imaginary is "Psycho Killer".

TP: Does David tend to write songs about specific relationships?

TW: "No Compassion" was written at the same time as a relationship with a specific girl and has a lot in it that could be related to her. But David was also just getting to know me and we were talking about what we believed, so it's not really about a specific girl. I couldn't believe "The Girls Want to Be with the Girls" when I saw it; the words were all verbatim out of a conversation he and I had. David was learning that girls are just like boys: sometimes it's reassuring for girls to be with other girls in each other's company; it's not because they're sitting in the corner laughing at the boys.



TP: Do you try to be sexy—or unsexy—when you perform?

DB: No, never. I don't even think about it. I think a certain note in a certain place is sensuous. There's some synthesizer swells and little pings in "Mind" that I think are real sensuous. To me that's a little deeper than rubbing your groin.

TP: Do women treat you differently since your success?

DB: A little bit. I can talk to girls now—or girls will talk to me. I might have been afraid to approach them before.

TP: Do you have an aberrant or a normal personality?

DB: I think it's pretty normal. I tend to think I don't do very exciting interviews; I've read others that are much better. The Ramones, Iggy Pop and Jonathan Richman are really funny, really entertaining to read. They give you absolutely no idea of the way the people work, the kinds of decisions they made about what they do.

TP:Are you generally a happy or an unhappy person?

DB: I'm pretty happy most of the time. I get depressed occasionally but nothing serious. I've never been to a psychiatrist and I've never been in a hospital, so I guess I'm doing okay.

DB: I like the idea of trying to remain human and still be a performer. It's very easy for a performer to become an archetype for the audience, and eventually become a character that they're stuck with. Then they play out this role when they go on stage. I'm still attracted to the idea of a human being on stage, with all the complexities that that involves, and still being interesting to an audience.

TP: Are you generally a nervous or relaxed person?

DB: (laughs) I'm pretty relaxed around friends. I'm not the life of the party or anything.

TP: Have you ever made an effort to be more normal around people?

DB: Before we'd played anywhere I wanted not to have any image at all, just to be a regular person on stage. I wanted to be able to talk to anybody—a cashier or a businessman in an elevator—and not have them censor their conversation for me. They'd just be themselves, and I'd be treated like one of their own.

TP: Does David care more about having his name on things than you do?

TW: No, it has to do with the way the press treats people. When we started Chris and I got all the attention—especially me, being a girl. David said it made him feel jealous, but I told him when we make an album he'll be recognized as a songwriter. And that's what happened.

TP: Does he like that?

TW: Of course he does. But people can hurt you just as much by being sycophantic and saying wonderful things about you that aren't true.

CF: The only time Tina and I get on each other's nerves is when we haven't gotten enough sleep.

TP: By and large it works well?

TW: Sometimes I get really pissed off when I have to do all the dishes where we rehearse, because it's my home. Chris lets them pile up much longer than I would.

TP: Did you ever worry you were turning into a cold person?

DB: Not at all. I felt that by being dispassionate, I could work on songs I could sing with more emotion than some of the earlier stuff. Some of them have more singable melodies—for me, anyway—and some are structured so that they were easier to sing with emotion. They would bring out emotions when you sang them.

TP: So now songs engender emotions, rather than vice-versa?

DB: That's it. A good song will make you feel the emotion.

DAVID BYRNE/Ebet Roberts

TW: What we're trying to avoid is art being a business. What Andy Warhol says about art and business is real applicable to what Talking Heads does, but I think it's completely inapplicable to a real painter. When you meet a painter who's been painting for a long time, he has a hard time talking, because his thinking does not involve words. But in music, if you're thinking about songs, there *are* words, and though they shouldn't be taken as poetry out of context—you have to hear the phrasing, the emotion and the delivery within the music—I think you become more concerned with words. The more you love words, the more power they have—like voodoo. So you try to practice your words, find out what words are potent. There's a certain word that's very potent within our group: When we're working on something we never use the word "*boring*," we always use the word "*interesting*." If somebody doesn't want to do something, we've found that the key word to get everybody thinking in the right direction is to say, "That's not interesting."

TP: Do you often have disagreements, fights? How rocky is this collaboration?

CF: It doesn't come to blows. Usually if a song we're working on is just not happening for some reason, everybody realizes it and we realize we have to make a change. There are some stumbling blocks but it normally doesn't involve an argument, because usually everybody just sort of agrees; it's apparent that it's not working.

TW: We held David's hand for a period of time. Now David's very confident, he doesn't have to have that done.

TP: Why did you do that at first?

TW: Because people aren't born leaders.

TP: Initially you wanted him to be a leader more than he wanted to be one?

TW: No, we never really had a leader.

TP: Does the band make you happy?

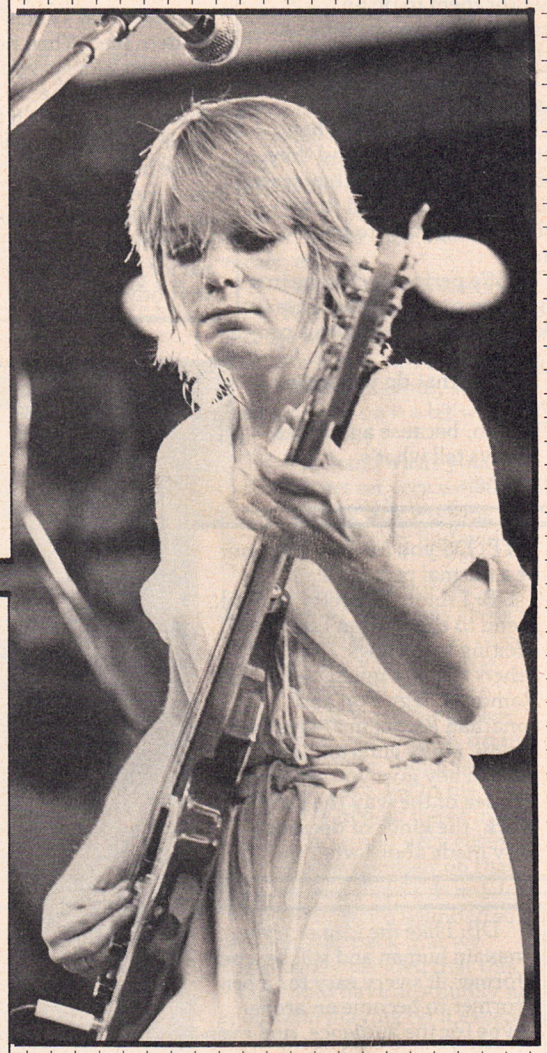
DB: It certainly helps. I was just thinking the other day that I'm sure glad I don't feel worse now that we're doing a little better.

TP: Does Talking Heads' power come from the combination of the four of you?

TW: It's the particular members. David is as aware of any of us; he knows that if he were to get another bass player he'd have a hell of a time, because Chris and I are completely supportive. We're purposely diminishing our image, not to our detriment, but just being...quiet, not distracting from David's performance. I always look at David.

TP: Why *do* you look at him so intensely?

TW: David will sometimes go into a solo, and that's when I should not do anything different. I have to pay attention to his vocals to know when to do what; that's how excitement builds up; David can't see us as much as we see him, so it's important to give as much support as we can; he's carrying a double burden of playing and singing.



TW: We feel each of our records stands on its own; each is one way of looking at things. **Buildings and Food** was written in a major key; **Fear of Music** was written mostly in a minor key. You have different moods and feelings about each record. The first record was real light and positive; this last record is sort of the dark side.

TP: Are you feeling darker as a group lately, or as people?

CF: I think maybe we're a little less...impressionable, and for that reason a little bit less excited sometimes. Not when we're playing, but when somebody says: This is so and so, he broke Billy Joel on the Island—maybe when we were just starting out, we would have thought, wow, this guy must really be important. Now we know that this person is just—nobody. Maybe our attitude is a little more sophisticated.

TP: Do you write music, then David writes words, then you add more music?

CF: Usually Tina, Jerry and David go over and over these things. I sit, listen and think about what I'm going to do while they're working out melodic and rhythmic structure. Then I usually complement or reinforce what's already decided on.

TP: Do you ever have a real disparity of opinions about songs?

TW: No, we're lucky that way. We almost always agree, have the same reactions. I didn't like "Paper" for a long time—the words weren't even written yet but I didn't like David's guitar riff. Then everybody's playing got so much tighter that suddenly it became a song. I realized it was working, and I liked it.

TP: What is the band's future?
DB: Never think about it.

TINA WEYMOUTH/Ebet Roberts